

II A 9 Promotion/Assignment Criteria

Lateral transfers and rotational assignments between career services and between components within a single career service should be a continuing process for the advantages they offer in providing for the greater utilization of skills, for broadening the perspective of future managers, for retaining valuable employees who would otherwise resign, and the like. Such has been the case as evidenced by the fact that, according to the Office of Personnel in a recent study, employees changed their major occupational codes during a twelve-month period ending 30 June 1978.

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However, these programs should not be of such magnitude that they adversely impact on operational capabilities or impede management's flexibility in terms of internal personnel development programs. The Directorate of Science and Technology has always had a number of individuals on lateral or rotational assignment outside the Directorate, and it is our policy to encourage intra-Directorate assignments for career development. We have no objection to a moderate expansion of such assignments, but must point out that a very large portion of our positions require specific technical/professional qualifications which necessarily restricts the likelihood of their being filled from elsewhere in the Agency. In certain areas continuity is essential to successful task completion, and lateral or rotational assignments could be counterproductive. In other areas where similar skills are involved, lateral or rotational assignments could be more easily accommodated and would probably be beneficial to both the organization and the employee. Thus, incentives may or may not be appropriate or desirable.

Tantamount to any lateral or rotational assignment programs, however, is the need for consistency in the treatment of those employees involved. Career Service panels should be required to consider and recommend lateral and rotational assignments in terms of employee performance, career interest and development. Panels must take particular care to collect information on an employee's performance while on rotational assignment for inclusion in rankings. Officers who are given lateral or rotational assignments often have cause for some concern since they may lose ground during panel evaluations immediately following a move. Their fitness report ratings could also suffer while they are in the "learning curve" involved in a new assignment. Transfers sometimes carry a liability because of timing involved, i.e. a transferee's previous service has not considered him because of his recent transfer and the new service feels unqualified to evaluate him shortly after EOD. We therefore believe that some procedure should be established to balance this potential negative effect on the careers of lateral transferees.

Agency-wide policy needs to be developed for the assignment of the individual who returns to his or her career service following a rotational assignment. A lack of such a policy and the subsequent lack of commitment on the part of career services or subgroups plus uncertainty on the part of potential rotatees inhibits participation in rotational programs. Additionally, there is a strong perception held by large segments of management and employees that rotational and lateral assignments are frequently used as a means to "dump" undesirable employees. This damaging view also discourages participation and its elimination would measurably

aid participation by the right types of employees in rotational programs.